

TRIBUTE TO HOWELL L. HODGSKIN, JR. FOR LONGTIME SERVICE TO CENTRAL NEW YORK AND THE U.S. MILITARY ACADEMY

**HON. JAMES T. WALSH**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, November 14, 2000*

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, at the conclusion of this admissions season, Mr. Howell L. Hodgskin, Jr. will retire after twelve years of service to Upstate New York as our region's admissions field representative for the United States Military Academy at West Point.

Mr. Hodgskin, a graduate of West Point and a one-time commissioned officer in the United States Army, has served as the U.S. Military Academy's liaison officer for seven different Members of Congress—SHERWOOD BOEHLERT, JOHN MCHUGH, MAURICE HINCHEY, Bill Paxon, TOM REYNOLDS, AMORY HOUGHTON, and me—as we annually seek to make nominations to the nation's service academies.

After distinguished service in the Army, Mr. Hodgskin was employed as a program manager and radar engineer for the General Electric Company in Syracuse from 1956 to 1989. Since his retirement from General Electric, Mr. Hodgskin has proved invaluable as Upstate's Congressional liaison to West Point. His contributions have assisted Central New York's finest young people in their efforts to enroll in the United States Military Academy.

As he prepares to step down from this important role, I salute him on behalf of the residents of New York's 25th Congressional District for his service and dedication to West Point and our nation. The best of luck always, Hodge.

TRIBUTE TO COMMANDER VIRGINIA TORSCH, UNITED STATES NAVAL RESERVE

**HON. JAMES P. MORAN**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, November 14, 2000*

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an exceptional leader in recognition of her remarkable service to her country, both on active duty and in the reserves, and as a staunch advocate of improved health care benefits for members of the uniformed services community. CDR Virginia Torsch's truly distinguished record merits special recognition on the occasion of her departure from The Retired Officers Association (TROA) to a position in the private sector.

CDR Virginia Torsch received her Bachelor of Science degree in Zoology from the University of Maryland in 1978, and completed her Master's of Health Science in International Health at Johns Hopkins School of Public Health and Hygiene, Baltimore, Maryland in 1982.

A year later, in 1983, CDR Torsch became a commissioned officer in the U.S. Navy's Medical Service Corps. She was sent to the Naval Hospital, Pensacola, Florida where she served eleven months as the Assistant Comp-troller. She then transferred to the Armed Forces Medical Intelligence Center, Fort

Detrick, Maryland as a medical intelligence research specialist, writing medical studies on countries in Southeast Asia. Three years later in 1987, CDR Torsch transferred to the Pentagon where she served on the Navy Surgeon General's staff as the Assistant for Fleet Support in the Medical Operations and Planning Division. During this tour, CDR Torsch also completed the Naval War College's seminar program, graduating with distinction in 1989. In November 1990, CDR Torsch affiliated with the Navy Reserves where she is currently attached to the National Naval Medical Command Bethesda 106 unit.

In December, 1990, after leaving active duty, CDR Torsch joined the Strategy 2000 staff at the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA). While there, she assisted with the development and publication of "Strategy 2000: The VA Responsibility in Tomorrow's National Health Care System", which analyzed the potential impact of national health care reform on the VA medical care system. CDR Torsch also tracked and analyzed health care reform legislation and initiatives, both at the national and state levels.

In October, 1992, CDR Torsch joined the staff at The Retired Officer's Association as the Assistant Director of Government Relations, Health Affairs, where for the last eight years she has worked tirelessly to advance legislation guaranteeing lifetime health care for uniformed services beneficiaries. Because of her strong health care background, CDR Torsch was made TROA's principal representative to The Military Coalition's Health Care Committee. To illustrate the significance of this assignment, it is helpful to note that The Military Coalition (TMC) is a consortium of 31 nationally prominent military and veterans organizations, representing more than 5.5 million members plus their families and survivors.

Shortly after beginning her liaison with TMC, CDR Torsch was elected to the position of the Co-chairman of the TMC Health care Committee because of her ability to articulate forcefully the urgency of providing lifetime health care to members of the greatest generation and their successors and in recognition of her practical insights on the best legislative strategy to achieve that goal. CDR was a major contributor to the Coalition's Health Alternative Reform Taskforce (CHART) study, which identified several innovative ways to provide lifetime health care to military beneficiaries who were locked out of military treatment facilities when they attained Medicare eligibility. That landmark study became the blueprint for several laws that were enacted in the last five years.

In 1997, Congress enacted a three-year demonstration of a concept called Medicare subvention, through which the Health Care Financing Administration would reimburse the Department of Defense (DOD) for care provided to Medicare-eligible members of the uniformed services community in Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs). That program, now called TRICARE Senior Prime, was included in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 and is currently in operation at 10 MTFs.

Over the years, CDR Torsch and other members of The Military Coalition have worked very closely with my staff in developing an option to allow Medicare-eligible service beneficiaries to enroll in the Federal Employees Health benefits Program (FEHBP), the same program that is available to virtually

all Federal civilian employees, Congressional staff members and Members of Congress. In 1998, an amendment to the FY 1999 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which I sponsored along with my distinguished colleagues, WILLIAM MAC THORNBERRY and J.C. WATTS, provided authority for DOD to conduct a three-year demonstration to determine the financial and other impacts of allowing Medicare-eligible service beneficiaries to enroll in FEHBP. The test of FEHBP-65, as it is called, is also underway at 10 locations around the country. I am convinced the results of this demonstration will prove conclusively that FEHBP is a cost-effective and viable option that should be made available to all retirees.

The FY 1999 NDAA also provided authority to conduct two other demonstrations for Medicare-eligible retirees which CDR Torsch and the coalition collaborated on with the Armed Services Committees: TRICARE as second-payer to Medicare; and the enrollment in DOD's mail order and retail pharmacy programs.

CDR Torsch's unwavering efforts to provide a meaningful health care benefit to Medicare-eligible members of the uniformed services community culminated this year when Congress established in the FY 2001 National Defense Authorization Act a lifetime entitlement to TRICARE for service retirees, their family members and survivors. Effective on October 1, 2001, the TRICARE-for-Life option will not require participants in this program to pay enrollment fees or deductibles. CDR Torsch and the Military Coalition also advocated successfully to have Congress offer a TRICARE prescription drug benefit in the final FY 2001 NDAA. As evidence of her commitment and effectiveness in advocating on behalf of military retirees, Congress also adopted a key recommendation offered by CDR Torsch in her testimony earlier this year that beneficiaries should not be required to pay enrollment fees or premiums to participate because doing so would deny this benefit to those who need it most.

Taken together, these initiatives comprise the most significant improvements in military health care ever undertaken. Thanks in large measure to the dedication by CDR Torsch, TROA and other advocates of military retirees, Congress has demonstrated its commitment to providing lifetime health care to our nation's military personnel and their families. I commend their involvement in this area and believe these efforts should prove invaluable in reversing declining retention and readiness trends in all services.

Mr. Speaker, CDR Torsch has been a leader in every sense of the word—a leader in TROA, the Military Coalition and the entire retired community. Her health care contributions have made an indelible mark on the lives of millions of retirees that will benefit them for years to come. I urge you to join me in wishing her continued success in her new endeavors and in her continued service to this nation.

CONCERNING ABILENE  
PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

**HON. CHARLES W. STENHOLM**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, November 14, 2000*

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the 50th anniversary of one of